

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9044

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E.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS: EWWT, CA

SUBJ: ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY/WELLAND CANAL TOLLS QUESTION

REF: OTTAWA 717, AND OTTAWA 699

1. FROM CONVERSATIONS MARCH 3 WITH ROY ILLING (ADMINISTRATOR, CANADIAN MARINE TRANSPORTATION ADMINISTRATION, MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT), AND MARCH 5 WITH GEORGE SCOTT (SENIOR ASSISTANT DEPUTY MINISTER OF TRANSPORT), TCO OBTAINED IMPRESSION THAT REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT CONSULTATIONS MAY NOT BE MADE AS IMMINENTLY AS TRANSPORT MINISTER LANG'S REMARKS SUGGESTED. ILLING EMPHASIZED NEED FOR GOC TO MAKE UP ITS OWN MIND REGARDING HOW IT WISHES TO RATIONALIZE PRESENT DEBT STRUCTURE OF CANADIAN SEAWAY AUTHORITY AND SUGGESTED REQUEST FOR CONSULTATIONS MIGHT NOT BE MADE UNTIL THIS HAD ADVANCED FURTHER IN CABINET. SCOTT SAID THE SAME, BUT HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE RATIONALIZATION OF THE FINANCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE SEAWAY, THE NATIONAL HARBOURS BOARD AND CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS WERE ALL BEING LOOKED AT TOGETHER AND THIS WAS A COMPLEX UNDERTAKING. HE SUGGESTED MID-MAY MIGHT BE THE EARLIEST FOR PRELIMINARY RESOLUTION OF POLICY ON THESE RESTRUCTURINGS AND AT THAT TIME CONSULTATIONS COULD BE REQUESTED.

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2. SCOTT AND ILLING ALSO AFFIRMED THAT MOT WAS NOT PRESENTLY DISPOSED TO ACT UNILATERALLY WITH RESPECT TO WELLAND TOLLS. THEY CONSIDERED THIS A MATTER FOR DISCUSSION WITH THE UNITED STATES. HOWEVER, SCOTT CAUTIONED HE COULD NOT ANTICIPATE THE CABINET ON THIS POINT. WITH THE GOC IN A PERIOD OF FISCAL RETRENCHMENT--IN WHICH TRANSPORT SUBSIDIES TO THE MARITIMES ARE BEING CUT AND EXPENDITURES THERE AND IN WESTERN CANADA BEING CURTAILED--VARIOUS REGIONAL INTERESTS ARE POINTING TO THE WELLAND FINANCIAL SITUATION (AND INDEED TO THE REST OF THE SEAWAY AS WELL) AND DEMANDING THAT THE GOC ACT TO RAISE MORE MONEY THROUGH TOLLS ON THESE WATERWAYS. THUS, SOME FUNDS MUGHT BECOME AVAILABEL FOR THEIR SPECIFIC INTERESTS. THESE PRESSURES ARE ACTIVELY REFLECTED IN THE CABINER AND HOW IT WILL ACT REMAINS TO BE SEEN.

3. COMMENT: EMBASSY STILL FEELS IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO ALERT EXTAFF TO OUR INTERESTS WITH RESPECT TO ANY PROPOSED WELLAND TOLLS (OTTAWA 699, PARA 3).
ENDERS

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Margaret P. Grafeld
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